

Message Text

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ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 COME-00 EB-07 INT-05 AGRE-00
DLOS-06 SAL-01 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 ITC-01
STR-04 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /049 W
-----132251Z 034242 /66

R 130835Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1487

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0317

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EFIS KS
SUBJ: ROKG REQUEST FOR 150,000 TON FISHING QUOTA

REF: SEOUL 0313

1. SUMMARY: REFTEL TRANSMITS THE TEXT OF THE ROKG'S NOTE REQUESTING A 150,000 TON FISHING QUOTA. IN ORAL REMARKS, MOFA DIRECTOR OF ECON AFFAIRS BUREAU MADE SEVERAL POINTS TO THE ECON COUNSELOR.
2. THE FISHING INDUSTRY HAD COMPLETED FILLING OUT THEIR APPLICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL SHIP PERMITS AND THEY HAD BEEN TRANSMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE. THE ENTIRE INDUSTRY HAD REQUESTED A QUOTA OF 450,000 TONS. HAM, HOWEVER, HAD SEEN THAT AS UNREALISTIC AND HAD GOT THEM TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT TO 150,000 TONS.
3. THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD RAISED THE SUBJECT OF THE FISHING QUOTA WITH AMBASSADOR SNEIDER AND NOW WISHED TO FOLLOW UP WITH A NOTE OUTLINING THE ROKG'S DEEP CONCERN THAT A SMALL QUOTA WOULD SERIOUSLY DAMAGE THEIR FISHING FLEET AND LABOR FORCE AND WOULD DEPRIVE THEM OF ESSENTIAL PROTEIN.
4. ECON COUNSELOR RESPONDED BY STATING THAT THE EMBASSY WAS

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FULLY AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM FOR THE ROKG AND WOULD TRANSMIT THEIR CONCERN TO WASHINGTON AUTHORITIES. AT THE SAME TIME, IT HAD TO BE RECOGNIZED THAT THE RESTRICTIONS ON FISHING WERE PRIMARILY TO CONSERVE THE RESOURCE, WHICH OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE BEEN SO SERIOUSLY DEPLETED AS TO CAUSE WORSE DAMAGE TO THEIR INDUSTRY AND THEIR DIETS. SINCE CONSERVATION MEASURES WILL RESULT IN SOME REDUCTION IN THE AVAILABILITY OF FISH,

THE ROKG MIGHT WANT TO BEGIN THINKING OF WAYS TO INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF ALTERNATIVE PROTEIN FOODS. HAM NOTED THAT THEY WERE A POOR COUNTRY, IN CONTRAST TO JAPAN WHICH COULD AFFORD TO IMPORT BEEF. ECON COUNSELOR RESPONDED THAT VEGETABLE PROTEIN SOURCES MIGHT ALSO BE WORTH EXPLORING.

5. HAM THEN TOOK UP THE QUESTION OF POTENTIAL RESTRICTIONS IN THE RUSSIAN 200-MILE ZONE (REPORTED IN SEOUL 0303), NOTING THAT A LOSS OF RIGHTS THERE AND IN THE U.S. WOULD JUST ABOUT FINISH THEIR FISHING INDUSTRY. THEIR NOTE, THEREFORE, REQUESTED EXTRA-ORDINARY TREATMENT IF THE RUSSIANS WERE VERY RESTRICTIVE.

6. EMBASSY COMMENT: ALTHOUGH LOW-KEY AND PLEASANT THROUGHOUT, HAM'S PRESENTATION CLEARLY REFLECTS THE EARLY STAGES OF PANIC, AS THE ROKG SEES THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED ECONOMIC GROWTH THREATENED. THE FISHING QUOTA PROBLEM COMING ALONE WOULD IN THEIR VIEW BE BAD ENOUGH, BUT COUPLED WITH THE RECENTLY IMPOSED CANADIAN TEXTILE QUOTAS, LONG-STANDING JAPANESE RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORTS, EC PROTECTIONIST ACTIONS, AND THE RECENT ITC RECOMMENDATIONS OF NON-RUBBER FOOTWEAR (SEE SEOUL 0259), IT COULD JEOPARDIZE THE 10 PERCENT REAL GROWTH TARGETTED FOR 1978 AND INDEED THE ENTIRE FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN. CONTINUED ECONOMIC GROWTH IS IN TURN CORNERSTONE OF POLITICAL STABILITY AND DEFENSE AGAINST NORTH. WHILE KOREANS MAY BE HITTING PANIC BUTTON PREMATURELY, IN THEIR PERSPECTIVE THEIRS IS STILL A MARGINAL COUNTRY WHICH MUST GROW TO SURVIVE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FISHING INDUSTRY, FISHING AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 13-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SEOUL00317
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770013-1119
Format: TEL
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770155/aaaabvrs.tel
Line Count: 88
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4f0e05da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION OES
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 SEOUL 313
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3605784
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROKG REQUEST FOR 150,000 TON FISHING QUOTA
TAGS: EFIS, KS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4f0e05da-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009